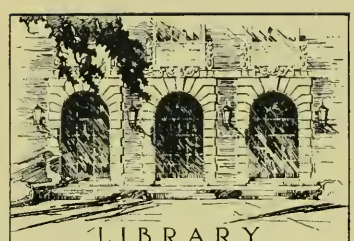

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A

# CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE

## CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE

OF

## SALISBURY.

LONDON :
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A

# CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE

## CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE

OF

## SALISBURY,

BY

EDWARD DENISON, D.D.

BISHOP OF SALISBURY,

AT

HIS FIFTH VISITATION, IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1851.

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TO THE REVEREND THE

CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF SALISBURY,

This Charge

IS AFFECTIONATELY AND RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL BROTHER AND SERVANT,

E. SARUM.

PALACE, SALISBURY,
OCTOBER 6, 1851.

A

# CHARGE,

*&c.*

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My Reverend Brethren,

I had hoped to have entered upon this Visitation at an earlier season of the year, but I was detained so late in London by public business that there was not time for this purpose before the commencement of harvest, so that I have been almost obliged to defer it till now. I hope, however, that the delay has not been inconvenient to you, while it has given me more opportunity of considering the answers you have made to the queries addressed to you, as well as any other remarks you have communicated to me, in reply to the general invitation I gave you to this effect.

I beg to assure you that I greatly value this, as well as every other means of fuller acquaintance, both with the mode in which, according to the wisdom given unto you, you are carrying out the work of the ministry in your respective parishes, and with the judgment you may have formed on any matters

of general interest affecting the well-being of the Church. I have carefully gone through every return I have received: and if I do not now advert to every point, on which one or other of you may have addressed me, it will not be from having overlooked or disregarded what any of you have said; but because amid so great variety of matter as, on one side or other, engages our attention, I can select for remark such topics only as appear to be of the greatest importance, or most general interest.

I will not occupy our time with setting before you in detail the statistical results of the answers to my inquiries. I have done so on former occasions in most of the points to which they refer; and, from the nature of this diocese, which consists almost entirely of small agricultural parishes, there is much less of change within the triennial period than in manufacturing or commercial districts. In one respect, indeed, the late census shows, in a remarkable and very important particular, this stationary character, inasmuch as regards the Wiltshire portion of my diocese, there is an actual decrease of population in the whole period which has elapsed since 1841; this being the only county in England, in which this is the case. And it is probable that the increase of 9418 persons in the county of Dorset during the same time is mainly to be referred to the earlier part of the decennial period, before the extensive emigration which has taken place in the last few years: and therefore, though there are no means of

exactly ascertaining this, I think it probable that in the last three years there has been in this whole diocese for the first time since any records of this kind have been kept, either no increase, or perhaps a positive decrease of the population [1].

I trust that in our agricultural parishes this may be for good, as regards the physical condition of the people; and if so, it ought also to be advantageous as respects their moral and religious character. There is now an increasing sense of the intimate union which exists between these subjects; and I hope that the recognition of this will tend greatly to stimulate the advance of improvement in both.

At all events, this fact indicates a state of things very different from that in those parts of the country, in which the rapid growth of the population outstrips every effort that can be made for the supply of spiritual ministrations; whereas here the exertions of the last fifteen years have gone very far towards removing the deficiency in this respect which then existed. There is, indeed, still ample scope for the operations of our Church Building Association, as well as for the exertions of private benevolence, as your returns show me that there are seventy-two parishes in the diocese, in which additional church accommodation is still required. But in the greater part of these, all

[1] In 169 parishes the population has decreased in the whole decennial period; and though in 259 there has been some increase, it has generally been very slight, and probably is not to be referred to the last few years.

that is needed might be attained by an improved arrangement of seats in the existing building, or by some slight addition to it; and there are now comparatively very few places which call for the erection of additional churches, and the formation of new ecclesiastical districts. But some such there are, and the very smallness of their number should make us only the more zealous in dealing with every case, so as to remove altogether from amongst us a cause of evil, the means of remedying which appear to have been placed, by the Providence of God, within our reach.

The returns you have made to me exhibit, in other respects, a further progress of the same improvement as regards the outward order of the diocese, to which I have adverted on former occasions. Nor should I think it necessary now to refer to this, were it not that there appears to be in many quarters a morbid spirit of impatience, which indisposes men to await the progress of improvements, which, though prospectively provided for, can only take effect gradually.

Thus, for instance, pluralities and non-residence are, under the operation of the existing law, gradually, and not slowly, dying away. More than one-third of the cases which existed in this diocese twelve years ago have since ceased; and the same remark applies to many other points which are often made the subject of invidious comment, and in which the Church or its ministers are attacked on account of real or supposed abuses, which are, in

fact, but the lingering remains of a past system, amended for the future. As an example of the progress that has been made in other respects, I may mention, that at the time of my first visitation, in the year 1839, there were in the diocese only 143 parishes, in which, there being two services on the Lord's-day, instruction was given at both by sermons, or lectures, or catechizing; whereas, in the present returns, 295 parishes come under this head. The Holy Communion is now celebrated monthly in eighty-four parishes, whereas ten years ago, this was the case in only thirty-five: and so, in other ways, there is very much which gives me ground to believe that you, my brethren, are, as a body, increasingly alive to the responsibilities of your calling, and more earnest in the endeavour to discharge those duties, the importance of which we must yet allow we all of us still fail fully to appreciate.

For myself, I trust that I have no desire so near my heart, as that of being allowed to assist you by advice and oversight, to take counsel with you as to the best manner of doing in your respective parishes the work committed to you, and to discharge in such measure as I am able, that portion of our common responsibility which devolves more immediately upon myself.

The season of Confirmation is that which more especially brings me into your several parishes; and I find always that nothing more repays the additional trouble than every increase I can make in

the number of places I visit for this purpose. In my last tour of Confirmations I administered this rite at eighty-two places, instead of sixty-four, which had been the number in the preceding one. And I have also, agreeably to the announcement I made to you at my last visitation, held Confirmations each year in some of the chief places of my diocese,—a practice I hope to continue. So far as I am aware, the arrangements I have now adopted have appeared to most of you satisfactory. But as I propose (God willing) to hold a general Confirmation in Wilts next year, and in Dorset the following one, I would again invite from you any further suggestions on this subject, only requesting that any clergyman who may wish to offer such, will consult about it with the Rural Dean, and convey the communication to me through him.

As regards the progress of education, we have the satisfaction of seeing our new Training School now completed, and of believing that its arrangements are such as to give every facility for carrying on this important work successfully. The reversion of the premises, which are admirably adapted for their purpose, has been most liberally made over in perpetuity by the Dean and Chapter to trustees for the Board of Education; and the expense of the purchase of the lease, and the alterations and additions, amounting to about 7100*l.*, has been provided partly by subscriptions raised in the diocese, partly by a grant of 300*l.* from the National Society,

and one from the Committee of Council on Education, to the amount of 2500*l.* We shall now have the means of educating fifty-five pupils instead of thirty, and this under circumstances of far more advantage than heretofore. And I rejoice to be able, on this occasion, to announce the completion of a work to which, as to one then in prospect, I invited your attention at my last visitation. The Secretary will now be glad to receive applications for the admission of additional pupils to enter after Christmas; but I should wish also to add the expression of my hope that such only will be proposed as really come up to the standard of attainment which our rules prescribe; a caution which has not always hitherto been sufficiently attended to. I am glad, too, that I can say, that the system of diocesan inspection of schools by the Rural Deans, and those who assist them, continues to act satisfactorily; and I again gladly thank those who have undertaken it. The practical advantage which is found to result from the visits of the inspectors commends them continually more and more to the managers of schools: and though I have not thought it desirable to press the reception of their visits in the very few cases in which, either through the excitement of party feeling, or from any other cause, a difficulty has been made respecting them, these cases have been so few as hardly to constitute an exception to the generally successful working of the plan, or to impede, in any important degree, the advantages resulting from it.

I wish I were able to say that the more real obstacles in the way of the improved education of the people, arising from the great difficulty of providing funds for the payment of teachers, and from the inducements to parents to take their children from school at a very early age, were at all diminished. On the contrary, the latter evil seems rather to increase; and while it appears to be almost universally admitted that in agricultural parishes boys cannot be retained at school after the age of ten, many of you, in the replies you have made to my inquiries, name eight years as the more general limit in this respect.

And it arises, I believe, chiefly from these causes, that the hope which I expressed to you at my last visitation, of an extensive advantage to arise from the further means of assistance to schools then recently offered by the Committee of Council on Education, by means of payments in augmentation of the salaries of masters and mistresses, and for the services of pupil-teachers, have been, as regards this Diocese, to so great an extent, disappointed. I do not say this as implying any objection to the plan itself. On the contrary, as at that time it appeared to me to be wisely conceived, so wherever it has been brought into operation it has justified the expectations formed respecting it, when due care has been taken to be guided in the choice of the pupil-teachers rather by moral qualifications than by mere intellectual ability or attainment. But for the reasons

above mentioned, it seems, that in our rural parishes so much difficulty is found in maintaining schools of such a class as can obtain assistance of this kind, that however successful the operation of these minutes may be under other circumstances, they are in a great degree inoperative in such a Diocese as this[2]. And therefore, while I would still exhort and encourage all who can to take advantage of the assistance thus offered, I cannot but greatly desire to see some mode devised by which aid from the public funds may be given on easier terms to suit the humble requirements of our rural parishes.

And now having said thus much as to education, with especial reference to our local circumstances, I wish to add a few words on the more general subject, and with reference to the questions which have arisen, or are arising, respecting it.

At my last visitation, in speaking on the subject of the management clauses, I expressed to you my opinion, that the general principle, on which some such clauses have been required on the part of the

[2] It appears by the last published minutes of the Committee of Council, that the number of cases in which teachers were receiving augmentation to their salaries amounted at that time only to ten in the whole diocese: nor has the addition to this number since been very large. And though there were also at the same time ninety-two apprenticed pupil-teachers, thirty in Dorset, and sixty-two in Wilts, these are chiefly in the towns: and there were in the whole diocese only thirty-six places in which they were employed.

State, as the condition of receiving assistance from the public funds for the establishment of a school, is in itself just and reasonable: while I added, that I did not think that the clauses, as they then existed, gave in all respects sufficient security to the Church, as to the management of the schools established in accordance with them. In common with other members of the Committee of the National Society, I gave my best attention to the negotiation which was entered into with the Committee of Council in order to their improvement. And for myself I am not dissatisfied with the result. It does not appear to me that there is any thing in the clauses, as they now exist, which need occasion any difficulty on the part of those who wish to obtain a share of the public money for the establishment of schools. I can indeed quite understand, that in some cases special reasons may very naturally indispose particular persons to adopt them, but I do not see any sufficient ground for objecting generally to their provisions. And though the Committee of the National Society deemed it right, and I think wisely, in the distribution of their own funds, to continue to act upon the less stringent rule by which their grants had been before regulated; I do not myself consider that there is any thing in this decision which places that body in a position of antagonism to the Committee of Council; or in any degree impedes that harmonious co-operation which it is most desirable should continue to exist between the organs of the

Church and the State on this subject. Nor should it be forgotten, that even in the cases in which persons are indisposed, on account of the management clauses, to accept a share of the public grant for the building of a school, it is still open to them when the school is built, to apply for assistance in all the other modes in which it is given without this condition. They may have grants in aid of the salaries of masters and mistresses; assistance for the purchase of books; stipends for pupil-teachers: modes of assistance, the amount obtained for which in some cases greatly exceeds that of any grant for the purpose of building a school.

You will see from what I have said, that I am far from approving of the attempt which has been made to keep up an agitation in the Church on this subject. I deem such an agitation to be most unwise and most dangerous. It tends to foster divisions among ourselves on points comparatively trivial; and this at a time when there is great need that we should be united, in reference to questions of real and serious moment. It puts those who engage in it into a very false position; and excites suspicions and jealousies, which may have a most injurious influence in other and more important discussions.

It is impossible not to see that questions are impending on the subject of education, in comparison with which this controversy, as to the management clauses, will appear very trivial. I am

anxious not to commit myself by any hasty expression of opinion with respect to such questions; and I would venture earnestly to advise you to adopt the same course.

We must be careful to maintain the great principle of the essentially religious character of education. We must firmly refuse to be parties to any compromise, which would mutilate the doctrine of the Church, or impede the instruction of the young members of our own communion in the whole system of scriptural truth, as we have received it. We must not consent to separate the letter of God's word from those doctrines which it is intended to convey. But if any plan for the advancement of education is proposed, which does not trench upon these principles, we should, in my opinion, be prepared to give it candid consideration, with the view of judging whether, through its instrumentality, those difficulties may be removed or mitigated, which now so seriously obstruct the education of the people of this land.

I expressed my sentiments to you so fully in the letters I wrote to you last winter, on the subject of the line of conduct which it behoves us to pursue, in reference to the questions at issue between our own Church and that of Rome, that I feel it the less necessary to enter again at any length on this subject.

On what I may call the political part of it, I shall not touch at all; and with respect to those

religious ministrations, which are our especial care, I am content for general principles to refer you to what I then said, with the view of urging upon you the maintenance of that sound and sober view of the doctrine and ritual of our Church, which I believe rightly to express its true spirit: and in upholding which, as I trust, not myself to be found wanting, so do I rely confidently on your co-operation.

Such a spirit will on the one hand lead us to recognise in the Church that authority in respect of doctrinal truth which our Articles ascribe to it, and will cherish in us that submissive deference both to positive ordinance and to the teaching of antiquity, which will preserve us from the dangerous excess of an unguided and unrestrained private judgment; while on the other, it will guard us against that vain longing for an infallible guidance in sacred things, which has, perhaps, more than any thing else, disposed those who have cherished it to embrace the system of that Church in which they have hoped, however vainly, to find that longing satisfied.

Such a spirit will make impossible that near assimilation of the practice of our own Church to that of Rome on the subject of confession and absolution, which published statements have shown to have been attempted elsewhere by some of those clergy who have since quitted our communion. I have thought it right at recent ordinations especially to advert, in my instructions to candidates for holy orders, to this

topic, among others. I have pointed out that while the Church of Rome requires of all her members confession to the priest habitually as part of the sacrament of penance, and as a qualification for admission to that of the Lord's Supper, our Church recommends such confession only in the specified exceptional cases where in the preparation for communion the penitent cannot quiet his own conscience, or where in sickness he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter; and that the manner in which this is done clearly implies that it is not the purpose of the Church to direct her ministers either to recommend special confession to the priest generally to all her members at any time, or habitually to any one. It is spoken of as the exception, not as the rule; as that which is to be allowed when, under certain circumstances, the feelings or state of the individual require it; not that which is to be enjoined or advised in the absence of such special considerations.

Such a spirit, again, while it leads us to hold clearly and firmly the doctrine which our Church so plainly expresses in its formularies on the subject of the grace given in the sacraments,—while it teaches us to look upon them, not as mere badges or tokens, but as "effectual signs," whereby, as by instruments, God works within us,—while it makes us see in the one the means by which the Holy Spirit grafts into Christ those who rightly receive it, in the other, the especial means ordained for preserving

the faithful in the blessings of that incorporation, seeing that, as St. Paul says, "*We, being many, are one bread and one Body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*"—While, as I have said, such a spirit keeps us constant in the profession of these great verities of the faith, it will yet guard us against exaggerations which some connect with them.

The manner and nature of such exaggerations it is difficult to specify, though it is often not difficult to discern them. They show themselves sometimes in acts, sometimes in modes of expression and forms of speech. Such, possibly, as are capable of receiving an interpretation quite agreeable to the doctrine of our Church, and which I willingly believe most who use them intend to employ in no other sense, but which a sound discretion teaches us to avoid, as liable to be understood by others in a sense we should not approve, and so either to lead them into error, or to give them offence. It is on this ground, that I should not myself adopt a new term, which appears of late to have been getting into use, and which speaks of the system of our Church as "the sacramental system."

I do not at all deny that this expression is capable of being satisfactorily explained. Some, perhaps, who use it, mean merely to protest against the denial of sacramental grace strictly so called, and to assert that the system of our Church is one of which the sacraments are a most essential part. Others would express the more general truth, that the whole

dispensation under which we are placed on earth is one in which God works inward and unseen effects by outward and visible means; and that as the two great sacraments are the highest and most especial instance of this truth, so is it seen in an inferior degree in other ordinances, and gives a character to that whole system in which these ordinances are comprised. Now, I need hardly say, that there is nothing in this but what I would freely admit; but it is obvious that they who are using the term "sacramental" with this meaning are recurring to that laxer sense of the word "sacrament," which, though sanctioned by ancient usage, and not forbidden by the authority of our own Church, has yet become practically obsolete in the language of our theology, and the revival of which must necessarily tend to perplex the minds of those who are unaccustomed to it. Nor must we forget that though such language is unobjectionable if rightly explained, it is also susceptible of a meaning at variance with the simplicity and purity of our Reformed Faith. Some of those who have most eagerly advocated it have done so, if not in avowed connexion with Romish error, yet in immediate preparation for its adoption; and we may be assured that others will look upon such expressions through this medium, whatever may be the real intentions of those by whom they are employed. I wish, therefore, to be allowed to caution you against the use of all new or unusual modes of speech upon this subject, even if

you do not perceive error to be involved in them. They may yet tend, though remotely, to conclusions directly dangerous to the purity of the faith; or, if this be not the case, they have a most certain, though indirect danger, from so greatly indisposing, as they do, the minds of our congregations generally to receive, as really held by our Church, truths which are only presented to them thus distorted and exaggerated.

And this leads me to what, in relation to this whole subject, I wish especially to press upon you, namely, the danger which there is on both sides: on the one, more direct, obvious, and immediate; on the other, more subtle, and liable to be overlooked, though in the end, I believe, more deeply dangerous. It is on one side the tendency to Romish error, or to observances or modes of statement which may lead others towards it; it is on the other, the reaction from alarm at these things to the contrary extreme —to low and latitudinarian views, to indifference, to scepticism.

We should especially bear in mind the manner in which each of these dangers ministers to, and helps on the other. And I have been glad to observe that some among you, themselves very jealous of every tendency to Romish error, do not the less see plainly that the greatest peril to which our Church is exposed from the Romanizing propensities which have in some quarters developed themselves, is not so much that from their direct

influence, as the whole tone of feeling throughout the country will sufficiently guard our people generally against this, as that from the reactionary impulse into latitudinarianism. While the result of this again would more than any thing else forward the pretensions, and strengthen the aggressive influence of the Church of Rome in the contest we have to wage with her.

I pointed out this last year in one of the letters I then wrote to you. I said, "Bear in mind that it is the great object of Romish controversialists to represent the Church of England as the mere creature of the State, called into existence by parliamentary enactment, and having no claim to spiritual authority but such as the civil power could confer. They seek by this argument to cut us off from membership with the Universal Church—to annul our orders—deny our mission—invalidate our sacraments. Were this charge admitted or proved, the Church of Rome is well aware how greatly the way would be smoothed to that universal spiritual dominion at which she aims[3]."

Many things which have taken place of late make me think it not unsuitable to repeat, and again earnestly to press upon you this warning. Many of you will bear in mind in reference to it a recent correspondence which has attracted much notice, which at least shows conclusively that there are

[3] Letters on the subject of the Papal Aggression.

those in the Church of Rome (though I would not for a moment believe that such baseness would be sanctioned by the members of that Church generally) who do not scruple to put in practice any amount of disingenuous artifice, by which they think that they can make any among ourselves instrumental in promoting their object in this respect. The lesson, then, to be drawn from this, ought not to be thrown away upon such members of our Church, as may have deemed too lightly heretofore of the importance of upholding, in reference to our controversy with the Church of Rome, the real position of our own Church, as a true branch of Christ's holy Catholic Church, complete in all things necessary for the discharge of its sacred office. It is no light or unimportant thing to maintain, in reference to this, that we have beyond all question a divine mission, real orders, valid sacraments; nor is it easy to estimate the amount of the injury which would be inflicted upon our Church by any statement, carrying with it the weight of authority, which either admitted the contrary of this, or might even by implication appear to underrate its importance.

And while, on the one hand, the open or secret attacks of Romish adversaries may well give a timely warning in this respect, so, on the other, is it most important to observe the plain indications which are given of the result to which the contrary theory inevitably tends; and which show us how they who deem lightly of the rightful organization of our

Church, and its divine character, peril also the maintenance of the faith entrusted to it.

If the authority of the ministers of the Church in spiritual things be derived from the civil power—if it be by this power that the Church itself has been constituted, then it follows necessarily that the State may alter as it pleases that which it has called into existence, and may prescribe both such modes of administration and forms of doctrine, as may to itself seem best.

And accordingly we see in some quarters such a claim openly put forth; and it is contended, that the regulation of all such matters belongs of right simply to the national legislature; and that every member of that legislature, whether a member of the Church or not, has an equal right to a voice in the concerns of a Church which exists only as an expression of the national will.

And while this theory, however strange it may seem, is put forward in some quarters as if it were really in accordance with the existing formularies of our Church, we learn from another the result to which, if it were true, it would inevitably lead us; and are taught again from this side, as before from that of the Church of Rome, how the power of preserving true doctrine depends upon maintaining the true theory of the constitution and divine character of our Church.

We see it asserted, by a writer of no mean ability, in one of our popular Reviews, as a disqualification

of our Church for its position as a national establishment, that it insists on maintaining the faith, as it has received it from former days. The writer sees clearly that its existing doctrines and formularies require it to do this, and therefore his charge against it is, that "it refuses to recognise the fact, that religious faith cannot be made immutable except under the humiliating condition of universal ignorance and apathy." Again, he says, "The primary necessity of a free people is an incessant change of thought and character. . . . The State we conceive must accept this as a fact; and in committing itself to an exclusive alliance with any body of disciples, must stipulate as an indispensable condition, that they have *a flexible faith* [4]."

Again, "In revising the formularies, nothing should be retained which conclusively offends the convictions of any considerable class of worshippers. . . . It is objected that but a slender creed would remain, if it omitted every thing which was inadmissible by Wesleyan and Baptist, Independent and Arian. We reply, in the first place, that with the slenderness or fulness of the Creed, the State, in determining the condition of established support, has nothing to do."

I have quoted these passages as conveying the open declaration of a very able writer of the results to which State supremacy, pushed to the extremes

[4] Westminster Review, January 1851.

which he would claim for it, inevitably leads; a result, indeed, quite incompatible with the existing constitution of our Church, but one for which they are preparing the way, however unconsciously, who encourage the claim of such a predominance of the civil power in sacred things as is at variance with the character of the Church, as endowed with spiritual privileges given of God. If then, my brethren, you are not willing to have "a flexible faith," and formularies framed to comprehend Baptists and Arians, (and why not Socinians and Deists too?) do not lend your aid to any thing which, however remotely, may tend to such a result. I have not, indeed, any apprehension that the great body of you are in any danger of doing so; and I should hope that those few who, in alarm at what is to them a more obvious and immediate peril, may need some caution respecting one which, being more remote, they do not discern, will become wiser when they see the ultimate tendency of courses, the professed and immediate object of which may perhaps commend itself to their feelings, and even to their judgments.

You will expect, in connexion with this subject, that I should not pass over without remark that decision of the Supreme Court of Appeal, in the case of Mr. Gorham *v.* the Bishop of Exeter, which has so painfully disturbed the minds of many among us. It is not, indeed, possible for me to enter at length into the questions connected with this complicated case; and I think it the less necessary to

do so, because the view I take of it, as regards the doctrine involved, concurs in so great a degree with that which has been stated clearly, fully, and ably by the Bishop of London, in his Charge of last year. I would rather endeavour, in the few remarks I shall make, to point out some considerations tending to allay apprehensions as to the effects of this judgment on the doctrine and position of our Church, which have, I think, often been carried further than the circumstances of the case will justify.

And, first, I would point out that even if the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had decided that the published opinions of Mr. Gorham were in all respects agreeable to the doctrine of the Church, the Church would not thereby be committed to such a statement. And in saying this, I do not at all question the authority of the Court, which I admit to be, as the law now stands, the supreme tribunal. But I rest this remark on the essential difference which there is in every case between a decision of any Court and a law, in that a law governs all future decisions, whether the judges appointed to decide approve of the law or not; but a decision is questionable by them, and will only be confirmed by them if they agree with it. And, therefore, though a long course of uniform decisions may have practically nearly the same effect as a law, a single decision is liable to be reversed, and if erroneous, probably will be reversed, should the occasion arise, and, in the mean time, does not in any way bind or

constrain the consciences of those who believe that it is inconsistent with the doctrine which the Church has plainly declared in those formularies in which its tenets are authoritatively expressed.

But as this would be the case, even were the judgment such as I have supposed, I must beg you, in the second place, to observe, that the actual decision has fallen altogether very far short of this. The Judicial Committee framed for themselves a statement of Mr. Gorham's opinions, about which it may suffice to say, that it differs in very material particulars from those opinions as set forth in his published examination. In fact, it excludes the very points of error, which were especially objected to. And yet this statement of their own is that to which alone their sentence applies. It is on this alone that that amount of sanction which this sentence can give is conferred: and every thing else, so far as the formal decision of this Court is concerned, remains altogether untouched. I am satisfied myself that this is the correct view of the effect of this judgment. And I believe that I may say that I am confirmed in this opinion by that of those who are more competent than myself to speak with authority on a matter of this kind. And though I am not at all surprised that such considerations should not at once have presented themselves to every one, I think that they who have felt this matter so deeply, as though their own individual consciences, and their position as ministers in our Church were

affected by it, will see on reflection, that they have been carried perhaps by warmth of feeling, perhaps by imperfect apprehension of the facts, beyond what the realities of the case will justify.

Do not misunderstand me, as though I thought it a light thing that any amount of sanction should be given to erroneous doctrine, even indirectly and by implication. But however much I may regret this, I have, on the other hand, the satisfaction of observing, that the result, which I ventured at the time to suggest to some of you, as probable, has indeed in no inconsiderable degree taken place; viz., that the truth, which appeared to be placed in peril, would, in the end, be but the more firmly established by the trial to which it was exposed. And this is to be ascribed, I think, in the first place, to the closer attention which has been directed to the language of our Articles, Catechism, and Liturgical Formularies, which are then seen to speak in such express terms of the remission of sins by spiritual regeneration in the case of all infants duly baptized, that they, who will receive the language in its plain, natural sense, cannot avoid the conclusion to which it leads them. And, secondly, the same result has been promoted by the opportunity which has been given for mutual explanation between men, who loving alike God's truth, and seeking it alike in his word, have been accustomed to look at that truth not altogether from the same point of view, and to interpret in some respects dif-

ferently the declarations of that word respecting it. Such explanation, by showing that the assertion of the gift of grace in baptism involves neither the denial of God's sovereign power, nor that of the necessity for conversion from sin in man, has removed misapprehension in many quarters. And while, so far as I am aware, neither any considerable number of persons, nor indeed any persons of any weight in the Church, have come forward as the advocates of those extreme opinions on this subject, which are the occasion of this alarm, many, I believe, who formerly felt doubts and scruples on the doctrine of baptism, and were reluctant to use, without qualification, the language of our Church respecting it, no longer feel such difficulties, but acquiesce heartily in the reception of a truth which, when rightly explained, they see to be as agreeable to the word of God, as it is plainly declared in the formularies of the Church.

And now I will turn from the matter of this judgment to what is a far wider subject, viz., the character and constitution of the tribunal by which it was given, and the need there is for amendment in this.

And here I will at once confess that I feel that the subject is complicated with so great difficulties, that I am very unwilling to commit myself by the expression of any very positive opinion respecting it. In some obvious points, indeed, the unfitness of this tribunal for the functions it has to discharge is so

apparent, as to be denied by none. This was, indeed, admitted by the Court itself, when it obtained, in an unusual manner, the advice of assessors who had not any jurisdiction in the decision of the case. And more than one of the eminent judges who are members of the Court have expressed their conviction that it is not properly constituted to adjudicate on questions of this kind, which were indeed committed to it in framing the law only by an oversight. This opinion was strongly declared at the close of the last session of Parliament, as being that both of himself and of his colleagues, by the noble and learned lord who introduced the bill under which these functions were assigned to the Judicial Committee of Privy Council.

But, obvious as the unfitness of the present tribunal is, the right mode of remedying the evil involves considerations to which it may be questioned whether sufficient attention has yet been given to enable us to arrive at a right decision respecting them. I concurred with the great majority of the bishops in supporting the Bill introduced into the House of Lords for this purpose in the session of 1850. But I am free to confess that some of the objections urged against that Bill were very grave; and I should myself be disposed to look rather to some other solution of the question than to the re-introduction of a precisely similar measure in a future session of Parliament. The authority of this Committee, as the adviser of the Crown, is the

highest practical expression under the existing state of the law of the judicial authority of the sovereign in ecclesiastical and spiritual things; and in considering what amendments it may require, we should carefully consider the principles of constitutional law on which it rests.

And this necessarily involves the consideration of the whole relation of the Church, as established in this country, to the civil power; and those changes in the constitution of the State by which that relation, nominally remaining unchanged, has been in practice greatly altered. The principles of that relation were at the time of the Reformation laid down quite satisfactorily on the part of the State in the preamble of 24 Henry VIII. cap. 12, the great statute for the restraint of appeals to Rome, in which, while the independence of the realm of England from all foreign control is plainly vindicated, the respective functions within the realm of the civil and spiritual authorities are clearly distinguished, and their proper parts assigned to each.

The same principle was again, on the part of the Church, plainly set forth in the 37th Article, in which, while the rightful supremacy of the Sovereign over all estates of the realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, is fully declared, it is likewise shown that it is not hereby intended to give to the Crown the power of interpreting the word of God, or administering his sacraments. And the same thing is repeated more fully in the Injunction of Queen

Elizabeth, to which that Article refers, as more plainly declaring its sense in this respect. That Injunction is entitled, "An admonition to simple men deceived by malicious;" and its object is to quiet the alarms, by which the enemies of the Crown and of the Church were endeavouring to excite men's minds, on the ground of danger to the spiritual functions of the Church from the aggression of the Sovereign power. In all these documents the principle is plainly set forth that it was not proposed to give any new power to the Crown, but only to restore that ancient authority "which is and was of ancient time due to the Imperial Crown of this realm, that is, under God, to have the sovereignty and rule over all manner of persons born within these her realms, dominions, and countries, of what estate, either ecclesiastical or temporal they be, so as no other foreign power shall or ought to have any superiority over them[5]." And while these principles are so plainly laid down in these guiding documents, it has been well argued that if the enactments which vindicated to the Sovereign the power of giving effect to them did not always carefully define the manner in which this was to be done, such enactments should be read, not in their naked letter, and so as to support inferences inconsistent with these principles, but in the light reflected upon them from these solemn declarations, and in harmony with what then

[5] Injunction of Queen Elizabeth, A.D. 1559.

was, and for a great length of time continued to be, the recognised mode in which they were carried into effect.

And if the Church did not always in those days very nicely scan the modes in which the Crown exercised the power entrusted to it, and was not always able to secure the consistent maintenance of principles which were in theory so plainly acknowledged, we should remember, first, that the same might be said equally of all other classes of persons, and even of Parliament itself; and, secondly, we should consider how intimately in all its parts the civil authority was then bound up with the system of the Church, and how many and great have been the changes which the course of events, and the vicissitudes of circumstances, have wrought since that time.

While, for instance, the relations of the Church to the civil power are still governed by the laws and precedents of the days of the Tudor and Stuart sovereigns,—while our latest admitted canons are those of 1603, the last revision of our liturgical formularies that of 1661, there have been since those days, first, the great practical changes superinduced by the Revolution of 1688, and the Acts of Toleration which followed; next, the Union with Scotland, as a Presbyterian country, at the commencement of the last century, bringing into the legislature of the United Kingdom those who, though not members of our Church, would have the

same rights and powers in legislating respecting it as those who were; then the yet greater changes of the same kind consequent upon the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities.

Do not misunderstand me as speaking in censure of any of these great political changes. I am far from doing so. They were the necessary results of the circumstances under which they occurred. And great as would be the blessings of religious union, great as are the hindrances which we daily experience from the divided state in which we live; religious unity being denied to us, it were unjust and unwise to refuse to admit the consequences of our divided state, or to desire to exclude others from any privileges which they are fairly entitled to share with ourselves.

But the privileges which others are fairly entitled to share with ourselves, are not those which concern the doctrine and discipline of the Church; and it is therefore reasonable to consider how greatly the position of our Church, in its relations to the civil power, has been affected by these changes; and to inquire whether it may not in consequence justly desire securities under present circumstances, which in former times were less necessary. And to illustrate this, look at the case in each of the three respects in which mainly the influence of the civil power in relation to the Church is exercised, viz.,

the functions of legislation, of the judicial office, and the administration of patronage.

And first as to legislation. Under the former state of things to which I have referred, though every thing which related to the Church which was to have the force of law, required, as now, the assent of both Houses of Parliament, as well as of the Sovereign, the much greater power and influence of the royal authority made a very great practical difference, as well as the fact that the legislature then consisted entirely of members of the Church. That which was agreed upon by the Crown and its advisers, as to ecclesiastical matters, was ordinarily sanctioned without much discussion of details by the legislature. We see this exemplified in the memorable instance of the passing of the Prayer Book with the Act of Uniformity by both Houses of Parliament in 1662. When it was even much questioned whether it were competent to Parliament to consider in detail the amendments which had been made in Convocation. And though the House of Commons decided by a majority that they had the power, they also decided against exercising it: and practically the book with all its numerous alterations passed through both Houses of Parliament without any discussion of particulars at all[6].

Now, in an assembly comprising every denomina-

[6] Cardwell's Conferences, p. 378.

tion of those who profess and call themselves Christians, every matter relating to the Church in every respect—its doctrine—its discipline—its revenues—the conduct of its individual ministers—is eagerly inquired into and warmly discussed. Such debates are not confined to those who are members of the Church, and not uncommonly call forth a spirit so little in accordance with the character of the subjects under discussion, that we cannot be surprised, that very many persons should deem it better to tolerate almost any amount of evil, than to seek the removal of it through legislation for the Church in Parliament.

And while the relations to the Church of the legislative organs of the State have been so greatly changed, it is not to be denied, that in effect a corresponding change has also resulted as regards those of the royal authority.

The power in the affairs of the Church which appertains to the Sovereign as a personal prerogative, is now exercised, as are all other functions of the royal power, under the advice of ministers responsible for every act to the Houses of Parliament, and chiefly controlled and influenced by the expression of the public will in the popular branch of the legislature. It can hardly fail to result from this, that the mixed character of that assembly, composed as I have described, should materially affect the view likely to be taken of ecclesiastical matters by the advisers of the Crown. There is obviously a

great danger that the patronage, entrusted to the Sovereign as a sacred deposit for the good of the Church, should be exercised in a spirit not derived from that Church, but from that mixed assembly which is the judge of its administration; that it should be employed, either simply with reference to political objects, or, what is yet more dangerous, with a systematic intention to impress upon the Church views of its constitution and doctrine, which those who are not members of it may approve.

Nor can such apprehensions which must be felt in relation to the exercise of patronage, but also exist in reference to the functions of the judicial office, the decisions of which are liable to be biassed, even unconsciously, by the sentiments of those who deliver them; as these again must be appointed under that same influence which I have above described.

Under these circumstances, I cannot be surprised that the minds of many members of our Church should be variously exercised, and especially that there should exist in so many quarters, a strong desire for the revival of those functions of the legitimate assemblies of the Church, which have been now suspended since the early part of the last century. Nor can it be denied that this desire has, in the abstract, a just foundation in the essential constitution of the Church, and in the sense of many wants, for which, except in such a mode, no rightful remedy can be found. But as this wish for synodical action has very commonly been declared, with im-

mediate reference to that decision on the doctrine of baptism of which I have before spoken, I am obliged to say, that I cannot myself, as at present advised, join in it in regard to this subject. I am satisfied with the expression of the doctrine of the Church which is contained in our existing formularies; and unless further occasion should be given for a fresh declaration respecting it, it would not appear to me expedient to set forth more detailed definitions than those which we now have. And so, too, as to any improvements which may be suggested in our devotional offices, or rubrical ambiguities, which may exist in them, I do not think that any advantage which would arise from the removal of these, even could it be attained, would be an adequate compensation for the certain distraction which would accompany the attempt, and the hazard which would attend it.

While, then, I concur heartily in the assertion of the right of the Church, as a spiritual communion, to the exclusive guardianship of its own doctrine,—while I would maintain that in its essential character is necessarily involved a power of regulating its own internal organization, and of accommodating its system of action to altered circumstances,—while I think the circumstances of the present time are such as to call for regulations which ought to have the sanction of the Church in its distinctive character, as well as of the State, to which as an establishment it is united,—I feel that the desire which exists in

many quarters for fresh doctrinal definitions is an obstacle to the revival of such action in the Church instead of a reason for promoting it.

It has been pointed out of late, on a memorable occasion, by one next in station to the Crown, and whose words deserve attention, not less on account of the personal character of the speaker than on that of his exalted rank, that as "to this country belongs the honour of having succeeded in the mighty task of reconciling, as far as the State is concerned, those antagonistic principles which move human society, whilst other nations are still wrestling with it, so we may hope that the same earnest zeal and practical wisdom which has made her political constitution an object of admiration to other nations will, under God's blessing, make her Church likewise a model to the world [7]."

It cannot have escaped so sagacious an observer that, as this happy result in the political state has followed from successive developments of civil liberty, so haply may the attainment of it in the Church require some modifications in the enactments of Tudor legislation, and in the application to existing circumstances of Tudor prerogative.

Nor can I despair, that enlightened and patriotic statesmen will recognise such truths as these, and be found willing in due time, if not immediately, to

[7] Speech of His Royal Highness Prince Albert, at St. Martin's Hall.

give effect to them. Let us, my brethren, be careful to raise up no obstacles to calm consideration of these things by exaggerated expectations, by intemperate language, by hasty and ill-considered action. Let us not give any grounds for the imputations which many are eager to prefer, that the clergy are disposed to seek the exaltation of their own order, and are desirous of having dominion over the consciences of other men. Let us study to be quiet, and to do our own business,—to bear and to forbear: if we are reviled, let us not revile again; if we suffer, let us threaten not. Let us not be suspicious of evil. Let us not be stirrers up of strife. It is easy for those who have no real responsibilities, to speak rash words, and to endeavour in every way to stimulate feelings only too easily excited. I deem it to be my office rather to use any influence belonging to the station to which God in his Providence has called me, for other purposes; and to desire to employ my time, and such measure of ability as I have for other, and, I believe, better ends.

This occasion, indeed, has led me to speak to you on a wide range of subjects: but I would desire ordinarily more and more to concentrate my attention on those immediate duties in my own diocese, which are my first care, and most sacred responsibility. I would desire more and more to labour with you in your parochial work, and in all that concerns the building up in the faith and fear of Christ of the people committed to you. And that

which I would desire for myself, I would also wish, my brethren, with all affectionate earnestness to impress upon you. I would impress upon you that here is to every parish priest his first, plainest, and most undoubted duty—here his pleasant work—here his rich reward. Here, too, is that which he can do most effectually, for strengthening the body of which he is a part. And while the unhealthy excitement of noisy agitation, under whatever name, more than any thing else, weakens and paralyzes the Church, every one who quietly and unobtrusively, in zeal and love, does his proper work, is, as a true soldier of the Great Captain of our salvation, a real champion of the Church, a true element of its strength, and a pledge of its perpetuity.

May God of his goodness, my brethren, enable each and all of us, more and more to aid in this, which is his work: and may He who is alone able bless our endeavours, and bring them to a good event.

THE END.

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